



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

This week's fishing report offers the summer time mixed bag, with no one fish standing out. In some places, the cobia bite is better, and in others it has slacked off. Taylor blues and Spanish mackerel have started to make more consistent appearances, and the spot fishery is picking up. The offshore action off of Virginia has been good, with dolphin, yellowfin tuna, and white marlin all making appearances in the fishing reports from the Virginia Beach charter fleet.

This week, VMRC staff will be sending out a letter to all tilefish and grouper recreational landing permit holders. Staff has reviewed the harvest reports provided by permittees, and there have been numerous instances when the regulatory requirements have not been followed. The letter will serve as a reminder to all permittees that they must provide accurate and precise information concerning their tilefish and grouper landings. Staff will also be removing the quantity feature from the tilefish and grouper online reporting forms due to the fact that some have been reporting only their quantity of fish harvested and omitting the individual live weight. Information on individual tilefish and grouper is vital to understanding the fishery off of Virginia and contrasting it from those fisheries further south under the current South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's management plan.

Next week, look for details about a special flounder collection program that will be added to the Marine Sportfish Collection Project (page 7) in the very near future. And don't forget to register with the National Saltwater Angler Registry (pages 10 through 12), which became law July 1, 2010. The Saltwater Review staff will provide updates on the Commonwealth's efforts to provide a free registration service for anglers in 2011 later this year, so stay tuned.

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Donna, at Captain Bobs, reports that flounder fishing slowed somewhat last week. Hot spots for keepers include the Chincoteague Channel from Captain Bob's to Buoy 35. There were also reports of 5-foot bull sharks in the Chincoteague Channel and on the beaches. Croaker have not shown up in the back bay waters yet, but anglers found success with kingfish, a few croaker, and spot near Buoys 14 to 10. Crabbing has been excellent in the Queen's Sound. From the surf, anglers caught spot, croaker, and kingfish. Offshore waters are HOT with bluefin tuna from north of the Parking Lot to 26-Mile Hill (around 70 to 90 feet). Yellowfin tuna were also found further out (near the Washington Canyon). Mahi mahi are around as well. Wreck fishermen reported mahi mahi in the upper waters and cod in the cool water on the bottom. Spadefish, black sea bass, and tautog were hooked at the wrecks

Wachapreague

A large bluefin tuna (53 pounds) was weighed in at Captain Zed's last week, along with several dolphin. The largest dolphin were around 21 pounds. According to staff, offshore fishing has been doing well in recent weeks.

Cape Charles

The staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle reported anglers catching croaker around Oyster and at the Concrete Ships offshore of Kiptopeke State Park. Flounder were caught north of the Cell, and a few keepers were brought in from the Kiptopeke Pier. The cobia bite has slacked in the past week, along with the red drum action. Tarpon have been sighted, but no catches have been reported yet. Other local catches include bluefish and sea mullet. The bluefish were lurking around the piers at night, and the sea mullet were found near the Cabbage Patch and the Little Bridge (between Fishermen's Island and the Eastern Shore Peninsula).

Ernie, at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle, reported several citations from last week. A 70-pound, 4-ounce cobia was weighed in, along with two flounder (7 pounds, 10 ounces, and 7 pounds, 4 ounces) from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Captain Ray Cardone, a charter boat captain from Cherrystone, reported good fishing in the area last week. He experienced nice catches of sand mullet, puffers, and 21-inch flounder. He also reported that spadefish had been caught recently.

Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel

Anglers were catching flounder in the waters near Cobb's Marina last week. No citations were reported from the marina.

Staff at Sunset Marina reported large flounder catches (over 22 inches in length) from the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

At Salt Pond's Marina, several flounder citations were reported. The largest was 8 pounds, 8 ounces, and 27 inches, caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. A catch-and-release black drum citation

(also hooked at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel) was also recorded.

Kathy, at Wallace's Bait and Tackle, reported that a few cobia were weighed in last week, but, overall, the last week has been a bit slower than the preceding weeks. Flounder have shown up in the catches, with numerous reports of spot and croaker. Local anglers are still waiting for the spadefish bite to really begin (initial catches has been small fish).

While no citations were reported from the York River Fishing Center, the cobia bite picked up last week. The flounder bite remained consistent in the York River last week, and the Gloucester Pier has seen a mixed bag of spot, croaker, and flounder.

Ken Neill, of the Peninsula Anglers Club and IGFA representative, contributed the following:

Flounder are the most sought after fish in the Bay right now. According to the NMFS, we are having a banner year. According to local flounder experts, fishing has not been great. The best catches were made during the Flounder Bowl. Since then, the bite at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel has slowed, but the bite up near the Cell and Buoy 42 has really picked up. Cobia fishing remains good. Sight-fishing is weather dependent. Chummers continue to pick away at the fish. Buoy 18, York Spit, and the Inner Middle Grounds have been good areas. Spanish mackerel are available along the ocean front and in the Bay up to Windmill Point. York Spit to Back River Reef has been good areas lately. Spadefish are available at the Chesapeake Light Tower and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. It has been the slowest spadefish year since they have become popular. Sheepshead and triggerfish are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Amberjack are thick at the Southern Towers. Some are also around the Chesapeake Light Tower. Offshore, billfish and dolphin action has been very good. A few yellowfin tuna and wahoo were caught. The inshore hills are producing dolphin, bluefin tuna, king mackerel, and false albacore.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

It is difficult to decide what to fish for right now since so much is available. Inshore, the summer flounder scene is still worth the effort. Folks are catching fish, but finding keepers is more difficult lately. The best luck is still coming from live bait offerings and jigs tipped with strip bait near the high rise section of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the usual haunts near the 3rd and 4th islands. Drifters are faring a little better near the Cell, Buoy 42, and Back River Reef, but the inlets are tougher this week. The folks at Ocean's East 2 report that the best bite is coming an hour before high tide lately.

According to the folks at Chris' Bait and Tackle, there are plenty of 1- to 3-pound spadefish along the high rise and islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the Cell, and Plantation Light, but the action is slow. The Chesapeake Light Tower spadefish show slowed last week as the jellyfish moved in.

Sheepshead are faring well, with most of these structure-oriented fish coming from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel proper, but many of these fish are on the smaller side. Clams and fiddler crabs are working well. A few sheepshead hovering around the 9-pound mark were

landed this week at the Seagull Fishing Pier at the 1st island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Tautog are also available in these same areas, along with lots of aggressive triggerfish. Many anglers are also finding puppy drum (juvenile red drum) over 30 inches around the islands of the Bridge Tunnel lately.

The cobia are still around in lower Bay waters, but more fish are hanging around the Ocean Front and the mouth of the Bay this week. Chummers are finding decent action on the Latimer and the Nine-Foot Shoal areas. Folks are also hooking red drum in these same areas, as well as off Fisherman's Island. Black drum are continuing to offer results to casters targeting these massive fish around all four islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, but this bite has slowed.

Croaker are biting around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, the Hampton Bar, and the Cell. The croaker bite out of Oyster was picking up, but it slowed this week. Nice spot finally made a showing in local waters. These popular fish are hitting well off lower Bay piers, the oceanfront piers, the Small Boat Channel near the 1st island, as well as Rudee Inlet.

The Spanish mackerel scene is hit and miss right now off Cape Henry down to Rudee Inlet, but many of the fish are nice sized. Reports are still trickling in of king mackerel sightings, but no landed fish are reported as of yet.

Virginia tarpon made another showing this week on the Eastern Shore, with reports indicating that several fish were jumped off and a few released.

Deep droppers are still pulling in tilefish, rosefish, and grouper, along with a smattering of sea bass and hake. Amberjack are ready for action on the local wrecks and at the South Tower. Jigs and live bait work well for these powerful fighters.

Offshore, the bite is still good. A few large yellowfin tuna, weighing up to 70 pounds, are now showing up at the docks, but the main catch is still revolving around bluefin tuna ranging to close to 100 pounds. Most boats are also encountering big gaffer dolphin, king mackerel, as well as some wahoo. Action is scattered from the Norfolk Canyon to the Cigar in anywhere from 100 to 500 fathoms. A few billfish are also available.

Virginia Middle Bay

Johnny, with Jett's Hardware, reports that the flounder fishing still remains good around Smith Point. Last week, bluefish continued to be caught by people trolling spoons, and hopes remain high that Spanish mackerel will be showing up very soon. Croaker numbers were low but available, and a few small spot were caught by people using blood worms.

Smiths Point Marina also reported that the flounder fishing remained strong around Smith Point Light and the jetties of the Potomac River last week. Some large croaker were still being caught, and the spot were on the small side. Striped bass were available on the Maryland side of the line, and small bluefish were abundant as well.

Butch, with Garrett's Marina, reports that flounder were caught in the Rappahannock River all the way up to Buoy 10. A few croaker were still being caught, as well as a few small spot. The Spanish mackerel bite hasn't picked up yet, but that should be changing soon.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Flounder have finally arrived in the Buoy 42 and Cell areas. Last week, fishermen caught good numbers of keeper-sized fish. The Gloucester Boys and Girls Club Tournament 1st and 2nd place fish came from those areas, as did good catches of less spectacular fish. There were numerous small spadefish at the Cell and the Wolftrap. There might have been large fish around, but the little ones were stealing most of the bait. The croaker bite in the Rappahannock continued last week and began moving into the Bay. Good numbers of spot were caught around Cherry Point, Butlers Hole, and the Spike.

Schools of small taylor bluefish were everywhere in open waters and could be trolled up at 3–5 knots. Spanish mackerel have arrived and were caught by trolling Clark spoons or small Drone spoons at 6–8 knots in the vicinity of Windmill Point Bar south to Wolftrap Light. Cobia continued to be caught around New Point Light and on York Spit. Shallow water fishermen continued to catch a mixed bag of spot, croaker, sea mullet, and small flounder.

Virginia Beach

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, fishing was very good last week. Offshore, plenty of dolphin and yellowfin tuna were biting, along with white marlin. There were several yellowfin tuna citations (ranging from 70 to 77 pounds) and a while marlin release citation. Amberjack were also biting. Inshore, anglers caught spadefish at the Chesapeake Light Tower, amberjack, and cobia.

Paula, at Fisherman's Wharf Marina, reported that offshore action has been good with white marlin catches near the 200-Fathom Line. There were also rumors of yellowfin tuna in deeper waters.

Virginia Piers

At the Virginia Beach Pier, numerous spot and roundhead were reported, along with a few Spanish mackerel, bluefish, and keeper-flounder.

Spot, a few roundhead, and taylor bluefish were reported from the Lynnhaven Fishing Pier, along with excellent crab fishing.

Spot were also landed at the Little Island Fishing Pier, at Sandbridge. The fishing tended to be better in the morning, just prior to high tide.

Staff at the Buckroe Pier reported that anglers caught numerous nice spot, along with croaker and taylor bluefish last week. Several cobia were hooked from the end of the pier, and crabbing has been good as well.

Outer Banks, NC

Offshore fishing out of Nags Head continues to see the best action with dolphin; almost half of the trips returned with their limits last week. Tuna catches were fair with yellowfin, blackfin, bigeye, and skipjack tunas all being caught. King mackerel, wahoo, and bonito were all caught in lesser amounts. Billfishing continued to see some success (blue marlin with a few white marlin and sailfish as well). Deep droppers were catching snowy grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, and vermillion snapper (aka beeliners). Striped bass and red drum could be found eight miles offshore. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel were along the waterfront and available to boats, surf, and pier fishermen. In addition, spot, croaker, pompano, and rays were in the suds. Inside the inlets, the flounder bite was going strong with a keeper ratio of one to one. Speckled trout could be caught early in the morning and late in the evening in Roanoke Sound.

South of Oregon Inlet, a stalled front has made fishing on the beaches pretty interesting over the past few days, and if you didn't mind being a lightening rod, then you saw pretty good success. Spanish mackerel were biting in the evening with two to three pounders not uncommon. Bluefish and sea mullet were biting in the Avon area. Two king mackerel were also caught on the Avon Pier Tuesday. Ramp 55 saw some flounder and sea mullet catches.

Offshore fishing out of Hatteras Inlet has been impacted by the severe weather for the last couple of days, but earlier in the week, the dolphin bite was going strong, and billfishing was not disappointing either, as all three species of billfish were available for the taking. Inshore action was good for Spanish mackerel, bluefish, and flounder.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.











THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

You catch it, you fillet it,

**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.**

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

| COBIA | SHEEPSHEAD | RED DRUM | BLACK DRUM | TAUTOG |
|--|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| KING MACKEREL | SPANISH MACKEREL | TILEFISH (BLUELINE OR GOLDEN) | WRECKFISH, SNOWY GROUPER, WARSAW GROUPER | BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES) |
|  |  |  |  |  |

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT, HAT, BOAT WHISTLE OR MEASURING TAPE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH of the DONATION.

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)
Virginia Beach Fishing Center (Virginia Beach)**



VIRGINIA SALTWATER Fisherman's Journal



Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.

The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing

experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

Individual measurement of caught, and released, on the most highly prized fish, such as red drum, striped bass, and summer flounder, provides a greater benefit to everyone. This past year, data from volunteer angler surveys were an important component in the calculation to reduce size limits for summer flounder in Virginia. However, Virginia data from Virginia anglers have not yet reached the level needed to stand alone. If the ability to reduce the size limit occurs in the future, the catch-and-release information on undersized summer flounder would be of great benefit.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions, and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal" and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

◆ Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:

- Fish
- Birds
- Marine Mammals
- Boaters and swimmers

◆ Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!

◆ Contact the VMRC to sponsor additional bins your area



VMRC Managed Locations*

Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton
Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague
Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles
Don's Bait and Tackle, Wachapreague
Lancaster County (multiple locations)
Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach
Newport News (multiple locations)
Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk
Wallace's Bait and Tackle, Hampton

*DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia

The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation and the Virginia Aquarium.

If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov.



National Saltwater Angler Registry



Under a new Federal law, most Virginia recreational saltwater fisherman must register with the National Saltwater Angler Registry.

Registration is an important tool that will help NOAA and anglers work together to conserve our oceans and preserve our nation's rich tradition of saltwater fishing. Registering is **quick, easy and FREE** in 2010.

New Law In 2010

ATTENTION Virginia Saltwater Fishermen

**Before You Drop
Your Line in the
Water, Remember
the Basics:**



To learn more or to register

www.countmyfish.noaa.gov

1-888-MRIP-411



ARTICLE FOR MEDIA REFERENCE OR DIRECT PLACEMENT
SOURCE: NOAA FISHERIES

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New Law: Most Virginia Saltwater Fishermen Need to Register with NOAA Before They Fish

Virginia Registrations Lagging Behind Other States

MRIP – According to the latest numbers from NOAA Fisheries, Virginia saltwater recreational fishermen appear to be lagging behind their peers in other states when it comes to complying with a new Federal law to help conserve our oceans and maintain vibrant, sustainable fisheries.

Under the law, most Virginia saltwater fishermen are required to register with the new National Saltwater Angler Registry before they go fishing this year.

As of January 1, 2010, Virginia fishermen need to register if they:

- Fish for or catch anadromous species in tidal waters; these are fish like striped bass, shad or river herring that live in the oceans but spawn in fresh water, OR
- Fish in the Federal waters more than three miles from the ocean shore or from the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, OR
- Don't meet any of the exceptions in the law.

Those exceptions include anglers who are under the age of 16; only fish on licensed charter, party or guide boats; hold a Highly Migratory Species Angling permit; or hold and are fishing under a valid commercial license. In addition, out-of-state saltwater anglers who are already registered with NOAA do not need to re-register to fish in Virginia.

Fishermen are reminded that regardless of their registration status, it is important to learn and follow the rules where they are fishing. The registration requirement is in addition to, and has no bearing on, existing or future fishery management regulations such as size and bag limits, closed seasons and areas, *or saltwater fishing license purchase requirements*. For example, no person, whether or not registered by NOAA, is permitted to harvest or possess striped bass in the US EEZ.

Registration is quick and easy and will be free in 2010. Anglers simply need to log on to **www.countmyfish.noaa.gov** and click on the Angler Registry link, or call the toll-free registration line at **1-888-MRIP411** (1-888-674-7411). Anglers will need to provide their name, date of birth, address and telephone number, and will receive a registration number that will allow them begin fishing immediately. After approximately 30 days, they will receive a registration card in the mail.

Virginia is lagging behind many other East Coast states in the number of anglers who have registered, as required. Over the six months the registry has been in effect so far, only 26,000 Virginia saltwater anglers have registered, compared to 75,000 in Maryland and 137,000 in New Jersey. In fact, the smallest state in the country, Rhode Island, has seen almost as many saltwater anglers register (23,000) as Virginia.

The registry is an important tool that will help fishermen and policy makers work together to better account for the contributions and impacts of saltwater anglers on ocean ecosystems and coastal economies. It is part of a national overhaul of the way NOAA collects and reports recreational fishing data. The goal of the initiative – known as the

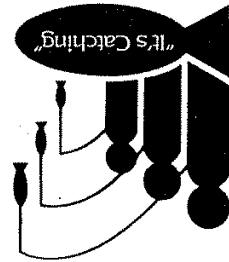
Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP – is to provide the most accurate information possible that can be used to determine the health of fish stocks. Reliable, universally trusted data will in turn aid anglers, fisheries managers and other stakeholders in their combined efforts to effectively and fairly set the rules that will ensure the long-term sustainability of recreational fishing.

For more information, visit www.countmyfish.noaa.gov.

In 2011, Virginia will implement its own free saltwater registration program, under a new state law that goes into effect July 1. The Virginia Fisherman Identification Program will collect the information necessary to exempt saltwater anglers from having to register annually with the federal government and pay any future federal registration charges. The free, annual state registration will be in place by Jan. 1, 2011.

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Practice

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